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MEMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Friday, September 8, 1944

Subject: LIGHT ON HOME-WORK: Information from rural electrification specialists
of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Everybody knows that the western cowboy's legs are bowed simply because for
any long hours of his youth he draped them over the sides of a cow pony. The bow
legs are physical evidence of the proof of the old saying "As the twig is bent, so
all the tree grow."

This is the time of year when parents and school teachers **should** keep the lesson
of the cowboy's bow legs in mind. For that old saying applies not only to intel-
lectual and spiritual growth, but it is a reminder that many of the physical defects
of adulthood can be traced directly to carelessness and neglect during childhood.

The bowlegged cow boy and the weak-eyed scholar have much in common. As twigs,
both were bent in the wrong direction. The child whose eyesight is subjected to
continuous strain, at home or in the school, may be headed toward a life-long ses-
sion with the oculists.

Most children start out in life with good vision, but before many years have
gone by, a surprisingly large percentage become nearsighted. Of every 100 young-
sters who start school for the first time each fall, figures show that only seven
are nearsighted. Experience has provided that out of this group of 100, as many as
74 will be handicapped by nearsightedness by the time they leave high school.

Many of these cases of nearsightedness are not discovered in early years. Poor
eyes can bring failure in grade school and unhappiness on the part of the child.
You can do several things to help save the eyes of your children.

First, find out about the lighting in the school your child attends. If you
think it isn't correct for the close work that children do, consult the teacher or

ring up the subject at the next Parent-Teacher meeting. It's hard to make any drastic change in schoolroom lighting during the war, but sometimes it's easy to bring about a big improvement in the use of existing facilities, with little or no expense.

For example, how about the window shades? There should be separate shades on the upper and lower halves of the windows, since two-thirds of the natural light on the inner row of desks comes from the top half of the windows.

The angle at which the desks are installed is also important. Placing them diagonally so that light comes in over the pupil's left shoulder, will often increase the light about 50 percent and reduce glare.

Other suggestions include frequent cleaning of bulbs, globes, shades and reflectors and the use of a flat ceiling finish capable of reflecting 75 to 80 percent of the light. Walls should reflect 50 to 60 percent.

Home electrification specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture also point out that a few simple improvements can greatly step up the efficiency of household lighting. The first thing to check is the size of the bulbs throughout the home. A 100-watt bulb is usually recommended in the kitchen ceiling fixture, and 60-watts are just about right in the fixtures over the sink and range. The bulbs in each reading lamp should add up to 100 watts or more.

Study lamps for children should provide plenty of light -- but watch out for glare. Its effect can be just as harmful as light that's dim or badly placed. You should have your lamps and fixtures so spaced that all members of the family can get the full benefit of them while studying, sewing, writing and doing other close work. And don't forget to keep lighting apparatus clean -- dust can rob you of as much as 40 percent of your light.

If you have a young child, see that he has good light, too. It's important to have the nursery adequately and properly lighted while an infant's eyes are in the formative stage.

Now for some symptoms of eyestrain or nearsightedness among children. Be suspicious if a child frequently rubs his eyes, if he displays fatigue or listlessness, or if he frowns and scowls while studying. Also watch his habits of posture. If he leans closely over the desk or table or if he tilts his head to one side, he may be having trouble with his vision.

It's a good idea to have some extra bulbs on hand and to keep all sockets filled. Good lighting is one of the cheapest modern conveniences. By spending a few cents more each month, you may be able to convert poor light into good -- and you'll save in the long run.

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